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Agenda item 153
Requests for observer status in the General Assembly

Letter dated 9 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request that the granting of observer status for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) be considered under item 153, "Requests for observer status in the General Assembly", of the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) in support of the above request and a related draft resolution (annex II) are attached.

I have the honour to further request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Lauro L. **Baja, Jr.**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Chairman, ASEAN New York Committee

06-56375 (E) 121006

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

Establishment

1. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok by the five original member countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined on 8 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999.

2. The ASEAN region has a population of about 500 million, a total area of 4.5 million square kilometres, a combined gross domestic product of almost US$ 700 billion, and total trade of about US$ 850 billion.

Objectives

3. The ASEAN Declaration states that the aims and purposes of the Association are: (a) to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and (b) to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries in the region and adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

4. The ASEAN Vision 2020, adopted by the ASEAN leaders on the thirtieth anniversary of ASEAN, agreed on a shared vision of ASEAN as a concert of south-east Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

5. In the 2003 Declaration of Bali Concord II, ASEAN leaders resolved that an ASEAN Community should be established comprising three pillars, namely, the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Sociocultural Community.

Fundamental principles

6. ASEAN member countries have adopted the following fundamental principles in their relations with one another, as contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia:

- Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations
- The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another
- Settlement of differences or disputes in a peaceful manner
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force
- Effective cooperation among themselves.

Documents registered with the United Nations

7. ASEAN has registered the following documents with the United Nations, namely, the ASEAN Declaration (1967), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia — TAC (1976), and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone — SEANWFZ (1997).

External relations

8. The ASEAN Vision 2020 affirmed an outward-looking ASEAN playing a pivotal role in the international community and advancing ASEAN's common interests.

9. ASEAN engages with key players in the Asia-Pacific region that have an impact on peace and security through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in order to contribute to the maintenance of regional and international peace and security. Established in 1994, ARF, as the primary forum on peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region, continues to help promote confidence-building and address major international and regional security issues covering both traditional and non-traditional security challenges. ARF is currently moving towards preventive diplomacy to undertake a more proactive approach in conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

10. Building on the Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation of 1999, cooperation between the south-east and north-east Asian countries has accelerated with the holding of an annual summit among the leaders of ASEAN, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea within the ASEAN Plus Three process. ASEAN Plus Three relations continue to expand and deepen in the areas of security dialogue and cooperation, transnational crime, trade and investment, environment, finance and monetary, agriculture and forestry, energy, tourism, health, labour, culture and the arts, science and technology, information and communication technology, social welfare and development, youth, and rural development and poverty eradication.

11. ASEAN continues to develop cooperative relations with its Dialogue Partners, namely, Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). ASEAN also promotes cooperation with Pakistan in some areas of mutual interest.

12. Consistent with its resolve to enhance cooperation with other developing regions, ASEAN maintains contact with other intergovernmental organizations, namely, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Rio Group, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the South Pacific Forum, and through the recently established Asian-African Subregional Organizations Conference.

ASEAN-United Nations relations

13. ASEAN cooperation with the United Nations began with UNDP soon after ASEAN's establishment in 1967. UNDP later became a special Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1977, the only non-State entity accorded the Dialogue Partner status in ASEAN.

14. During the fifth ASEAN Summit, held in Bangkok in 1995, ASEAN leaders agreed to explore ways and means of enhancing cooperation with the United Nations with a view to promoting peace and stability in the region and strengthening the work of the United Nations in the social and economic fields.

15. Pursuant to that commitment, the ASEAN leaders met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations at their first ASEAN-United Nations Summit, held in Bangkok on 12 February 2000. As the Summit called for closer cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations in such activities as exchanging information and organizing conferences and seminars on issues relating to peacebuilding, a series of seminars on peacebuilding in South-East Asia had been conducted in ASEAN member countries with financial support from the United Nations.

16. ASEAN-United Nations cooperation was further strengthened with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/35 in 2002 and General Assembly resolution 59/5 in 2004. Both resolutions generated additional impetus to cooperation as they encouraged both ASEAN and the United Nations to increase contacts and to further identify areas of cooperation, as appropriate. ASEAN and the United Nations, as well as its specialized agencies, have since explored ways and means of promoting ASEAN-United Nations cooperation.

17. The second ASEAN-United Nations Summit was convened on 13 September 2005 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. At the Summit, the ASEAN leaders and the Secretary-General of the United Nations reviewed, discussed and agreed to broaden areas of cooperation, which included energy security, development, debt relief, health, disaster management, trade and investment, and peace and security. In the Summit's joint communiqué, ASEAN leaders expressed appreciation for the support of the United Nations for ASEAN's goals of realizing the ASEAN Community as envisaged under the Declaration of Bali Concord II, with the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Sociocultural Community as its pillars. The United Nations also welcomed the possibility of ASEAN's seeking observer status in the United Nations.

18. The participation of ASEAN as an observer in the United Nations would serve to further enhance cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations, particularly in support of ASEAN's community-building efforts, as well as broaden and deepen ASEAN's interactions with countries and regional and international organizations.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations,

1. *Decides* to invite the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.